533 his waist from which hang a number of shells, claws, little horns,
222 teeth and similar trifles, beats on that rustic drum day and night without ceasing and, with the continous movement of his body, makes the trinkets about his waist rattle all this accompanied by a song or rather a lugubrious and high-pitched shouting which can be heard at a great distance. This ridiculous performance is not a simple demonstration of rejoining but rather, in their opinion, a rite necessary to hasten the ripening of the longed for and beneficent fruit."

"When a woman arrives from the forest laden with fruit, roots
222 or other eatables, all the other women of the village crowd to her
262 hut and she, after having set aside enough for the sustenance of her family, distributes the rest, the other women not saying a word of
[626] showing any sign of appreciation. Were she to refrain from giving away her surplus, it would cause the greatest displeasure, and might even provoke some dangerous quarrel."

"The Mataguayos are timid and cowardly, but vengeful in
181 the extreme. They never forget an offense—sooner or later they will
[671] be avenged. The law of requital is unbreakable for them. They avoid making war when this is possible, but if they are attacked they
[411] defend themselves. Their most common weapon is the arrow."

"They recognize no authority and no law. The child obeys
593 its parents if it wishes to and the latter, though they may love their children, have no power at all over them. Nevertheless one does not generally encounter lack of respect toward the old or toward the unfortunate." [594]

"The men busy themselves with fishing and only very rarely
462 indulge in hunting. Their agricultural activities are limited to the
[241] sowing of a few clumps of pumpkins and watermelons. With the
[283] juice of the latter they make aloja. Some of them also devote their time to making thin ropes of agave fiber with which they construct their nets."

"All other work is done by the women. She must not only prepare the food but also fetch fruit and roots from the forest; not only bring water but also chop firewood; not only look after the cleanliness of the hut but also make it. In one word: she is a slave."

"When a girl reaches nubility she is hidden in a corner of the
881 hut and covered with fronds and rags. It is illicit for her to speak to anybody or taste meat or fish for a determined length of time. Meanwhile a drummer goes through the same ceremony in front of her

It can be said that from the time of the Conquest such information as we have about the Indians in their ramifications and languages we owe to the Missionary Fathers. Any attempt to write about these Indians whom the Spaniards found on our continent really has to take very specially into account the writings of these meritorious soldiers of Christ.

"The Matacos are also known by the names Mataguayos, Notenes, Vejoses, Ocoles, Malbalas, Chunupis (1) and others, according to location. All of them with only slight differences speak the same language and their customs are practically identical. They occupy the western part of central and southern Chaco, principally both banks of the Bermejo River and the right bank of the Pilcomayo." [599]

1. Not to be confused with the Chumupi-Vilelas.

"The number of these Indians is probably about 20,000. Some of them already have dealings with the frontier Christians, among whom they spend some time each year, working on their ranches; while others live in complete isolation from the whites, whom they regard as their enemies, and not without reason, especially the Argentines who for some years now have been systematically ousting them from their lands, persecuting and exterminating them. It is probable then that within a few years the Matacos will have undergone great changes in their manner of living and will have diminished in number. Be that as it may the present day Matacos are still constituents of quite a large tribe which is different in some respects from the others.

The Mataco is of middling stature, somewhat slim and of a dark coppery color; apathetic in nature, reserved and wary, his glance reflects suspicion and treachery. His manners are boorish and his person and physiognomy vile and repulsive. He is a thief by instinct and he also steals because he considers it his duty. He is long-suffering and warlike, lazy and dirty in habit and innately cowardly and vengeful. The individual members of the neighboring tribes are characterized by a mental alertness which, though untutored is there for all to see. Not so the Matacos, who are mentally sluggish and to whom one cannot even attribute astuteness, in spite of their being sneak thieves. They are admired by all for the apparent lack of feeling with which they endure insults and also for the cold-bloodedness with which they will stab an enemy or allow themselves to be stabbed."

000 of small stones contained in a hollow gourd which they hold in their hands and rattle to beat time."

"They bury their dead very close to the surface, being satis-
764 fied to dig a shallow pit into which they place the corpse half sitting up, with a few small branches beneath and on top of him and a little earth. Because of this it often comes about that jaguars, who can easily dig up these careless graves, get a taste for human flesh and become man-eaters. Sometimes the Indians put a little pot of water in the grave for the deceased's benefit. They also commonly burn a few things which he had used, and also his hut. The relatives of the deceased have to go to his burial place and lament over it, accompanying their cries with the pimpin. These wailings, according to the locality, are repeated for some days. They have also other
[177] customs which they have picked up from the Tobas, to whom they are related and with whom they are friendly."

"It can be seen, then, that the Mataco tribe is at present a very
● 181 miserable one. Their way of living and their customs, furthermore,
648 and the circumstances of our times together with the region in which they live do not point to a particularly happy future. It certainly cannot be said that the Matacos who live in Bolivian territory are declared enemies of the [607] whites or Christians, rather is it true that they sometimes work for them and say that they are friends of the whites and wish to be treated as such, in spite of the fact that this friendship seems feigned, a cloak under which they can the better steal and conceal themselves. They rustle the Christians' cattle which they exchange with the Tobas for horses, and these in turn they trade off to the Christians for other things they need, saying that they have captured these animals from their enemies."

"Across from the Mission of San Francisco de Pilcomayo and
181 on the banks of the river (the Pilcomayo River--Translator) are the
787 ruins of the Mission of San Antonio, made up of Matacos brought together in 1863 and which, after having been in Bella Esperanza for two or three years were transferred to this place, where they stayed, in quite sizeable numbers, until 1879, in which year they escaped, although groups of them had fled and returned more than once before. While they remained at the Mission little or nothing could be accomplished with them in any way—they would not even consent to allowing their little children to be baptized when at the point of death. The

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797 final pretext which they gave for escaping was that their white neighbours wanted to kill them, and it seems that this was actually the case; and the Matacos had good reason to fear some reprisal for they continued to have an understanding with the Tobas in whose company they indulged in periodic stealing. They wished, or at least some of them did, to return a short while later, but the Missionary Fathers did not dare to readmit them as they could clearly see that at that time they could not hope to accomplish anything with such a depraved, shiftless and untrustworthy people, and also because they deemed it prudent to quell the slanderous murmurings of the whites who kept saying that the missionaries were informers for the Indians and aided them in their raids."

"And nevertheless it is a fact that the Tobas and also the Matacos stole a hundred times less when they were with the missionaries than before they came to them and after they left. I merely refer to these matters in order to point out the difficulties, which still exist, of converting and civilizing the Matacos; it may be that later on the circumstances will change, and the difficulties will disappear or lessen." [608]

XVIII

Observations on the Preceding Chapter

According to Father Cardús the Matacos are the Mataguayos Notenes [sic], Vejoses, Ocoles, Malbalaes, Chunupies, etc. One must not confuse these Chunupies with the Chulupies or Vilelas.

Here we see how the Noctenes can also be Notenes; and it would be interesting to find out what the dialect of the Malbalaes and Chunupies is like.

I have not thought it to be my business to abridge the reports of the Missionary Fathers because they are full of interesting facts and I am always wary of the personal element when the subject being treated is that of Indian nations around which there plays a certain discord among authors. Were I able to add anything, regarding these Indians, from personal observation, that would be another matter; but my field is limited to languages and I really needed trustworthy background material such as this in order to set the stage for what will later be said regarding the Mataco language and its co-dialects.

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I was able to come upon among the Matacos was this attempt at a poetic song, sung goodness only knows how, by the squaws. However, in spite of its failings it does reveal the use of rime:

[531]

Bonica nambonica
Se-le-ctie-no:
Bonica, bonica;
Nambonica, nambonica.

which means: I like, I do not like you to embrace me:
I like, I like, I do not like, I do not like.

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They have no dances; those violent gallopings about in a circle holding hands can hardly be called dancing. They are chaste, however, when they do dance, and if men and women happen to be at a dance together each sex forms its own separate circle, one within the other, but without touching.

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In a word, everything pertaining to the imagination, everything coming under the heading of religion, poetry or dance, can be said to be completely lacking among these savages.

[217] Chapter XIII

Social Matters (continued)

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But if they have no imagination are they not also heartless and insensitive? It has repeatedly been said and written that the bonds of kinship are not at all close and easily severed among the Indians; and this "fact" has apparently been picked up not from observation but by analogy based on the absence of the family and the existence of concubinage.

I am afraid that this is going too far. We are accustomed to and molded by our Christian tradition, which, by the way, is an exception to the immense majority of other cultural traditions, an exception which is paid for in part by pretense and infidelity, and the barefaced immorality which is prostitution.

It seems to us that if a woman is not joined to a man by all the sacraments of the church, and if she is not his only wife, then there results a shrivelling in all the finer feelings.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12
Choroti SK 7

In disposition the three tribes show great differences. The *Choroti* are pleasant and cheerful, and display to a high degree that humorous spirit which is often characteristic of the Indian even when he looks serious. They are lazy and carefree and love amusement, feasting, dancing, and games above everything. When the Choroti Indian has plenty of food and algaroba beer for the moment, he makes merry and eats and drinks as much as he can, but has no thought for the morrow and does not store provisions like the more advanced Chaco tribes. This particularly holds true of the men; the women, who in general are more industrious, show more forethought in this respect, collecting wild fruits in great quantities when they are in season, and keeping the seed-corn till the following sowing. But on the whole poverty is an outstanding feature of the material culture of the Choroti, and this is no doubt due to a great extent to their own character.

The Choroti are — at least nowadays — a peaceful people, and in the insignificant wars they have sometimes waged with the Mataco on the other side of the river, they have manifested very little organization or discipline. As I was told by settlers on the Pilcomayo, the Choroti were formerly more warlike, and like other Chaco tribes, they were even in the habit of scalping those enemies whom they killed during their raids.

The *Mataco*, although anthropologically closely related to the Choroti, differ from them considerably in character. The Mataco Indian is serious, taciturn, and gloomy, and in consequence more addicted to religion and superstition than his brother the Choroti Indian. At least nowadays, when the Indians are strongly influenced by European civilization, the Mataco Indian will not make a reliable servant and companion. Cleanliness is not a particular characteristic of the Choroti, but the Mataco are probably the dirtiest of all Chaco tribes. This too may in part be a consequence of their contact with the whites. On the other hand, the Mataco are more industrious and energetic than the Choroti, and accordingly, in their wars, have proved more valiant and capable of more organization than their primitive neighbours. In these respects the Mataco, at any rate the Bolivian tribes, resemble their neighbours the Tobas more than the Choroti.

As to the *Tobas*, their moral qualities and disposition have been described with much unanimity by many travellers. Nearly all have characterized them as bad, ferocious, treacherous, thievish, etc., qualities which they have especially displayed towards the whites. Typical on

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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●181 In Chaco, both the primitive methods of constructing the houses and the peculiar character of the social life must to a great deal be explained by the fact that the Chaco Indians are nomads, unable to remain long in any one place and driven by resistless forces from one part of the country to another. Both their enemies, partly other Indian tribes, partly men of an altogether different race, and nature itself have always compelled them to live a nomadic life. It is a well known fact that the interior of the Chaco has for many centuries been a place of refuge for savage tribes driven to these inhospitable regions against their own will, under the pressure of superior forces. Still more do natural conditions force the Indians to wander: vast inundations at certain seasons, complete lack of water at others, and a variety of considerations arising from the necessity of obtaining a livelihood. When pasture or game is getting scarce in one place, the Indans change their abode and move to another place where it is easier to feed their flocks and to eke out their store of food by hunting. Agriculture, although practised to a very limited extent, may also at times compel the Chaco Indians to seek new dwelling-places. But — as Mr. Grubb rightly observes with special reference to the Lenguas of Paraguay — the Chaco Indian is often driven to forsake home and friends merely by his restless spirit, »the result of generations of hard and peculiar circumstances fixing a habit upon him which becomes second nature». The mere desire to wander and to get a change, or perhaps to see relatives and friends living in another part of the country, may induce an Indian to abandon his house and to move away with his wife and children and his whole property. Superstition works in the same direction. When a death occurs in a house, that house is as a general rule destroyed and burnt, and if an epidemic causes several deaths within a short time, the whole village is destroyed and thereafter abandoned by its inhabitants. The Indians cannot persuade themselves to continue living in a place which is evidently haunted by evil spirits.

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648 Distant savage Chaco tribes have been in the habit of abandoning and destroying their villages after they have been visited by white men. In some cases the Indians, as soon as they have got to know through their spies that a party of white men are approaching, have burnt their villages and retired to the interior, unexplored parts of the country. Both Nordenskiöld and other travellers have noted with astonishment this custom of the Chaco tribes. Its true motives are to be sought partly in a natural fear of the whites, of whom the Indians have frequently had sad experience, but above all in superstitious dread of the mysterious disease-spirits

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Chapter IX.

Social morality. Property. Law.

In the chapter on the social organisation of the Chaco tribes I had occasion to mention the social sympathy and feeling of solidarity which unites all members of the tribe, manifesting itself amongst other things in the widest hospitality. A few words may be added in this chapter to illustrate this characteristic feature of the social life of these Indians.

Mr. Barbrooke Grubb, who is probably the greatest living authority on the Chaco Indians, regards the »socialism« prevailing among these Indians as their greatest curse. According to him, it discourages competition in the way of one man striving to rise superior to his fellow-men and effectively impedes cultural progress in general. No Indian is encouraged to have more possessions than his neighbour, because, in obedience to the socialistic law, he would have to work for the support of others of whom he does not approve. Accordingly he produces no more than is absolutely necessary for current needs. He never saves anything for the day of adversity because others are not doing the same and therefore, if he had a store in reserve, the thriftless would step in and share it with him. It is owing to this system that the Chaco Indian has become the thriftless, lazy, and selfish fellow that he is. The chief endeavour of the Mission led by Mr. Grubb therefore was not only to impart to the Indians true Christian civilization in general, but particularly to destroy their old socialistic system with a view to making them self-reliant workers accumulating property by their own efforts.[1])

Mr. Grubb has naturally looked upon the conditions and moral character of the Indians with the eyes of a Christian missionary and may be quite right in his general contentions as to the best methods of civilizing a pagan

[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* pp. 189 sqq.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

Chapter XI.

Warfare.

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The warlike character of the Chaco tribes has become almost proverbial. This reputation may be well-deserved as far as some natives of this hidden and savage country are concerned, but it does not hold true for instance of a tribe like the Choroti. The Choroti are by nature a peaceful people, and in the small quarrels they have at certain times fought out, for instance with the Mataco, they have displayed so little both of organization and personal courage that it is impossible to believe that they have ever been that ferocious and warlike people characterized by v. Rosen. On the other hand, such important tribes as the Lenguas and the Chamacoco in the Paraguayan Chaco have been characterized as great warriors by Mr. Grubb and Sr. Boggiani; on the Pilcomayo the Ashluslay, at the time when I came in contact with them, were still extremely savage and constantly at war with the Bolivian soldiers, and the Tobas are one of the most warlike tribes in the whole of South America.

The Mataco too, seem formerly to have been great warriors, at any rate more warlike than the peaceful Choroti. On this point Pelleschi writes on them: »The Indians love war; one may say so because they are very often engaged in fights. One war is followed by another, owing to the desire of the vanquished to revenge themselves, or the pleasure which the victors have taken in it. The motive of a war is fishing, or hunting, or the gathering of fruits on others' territory, the desire to take revenge for some offence, or the hope of taking spoils.[1])

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I have not seen the *Tobas* on the war-path, and I cannot therefore give the same minute description of their feuds and the customs they observe after a victory as I have given of the wars and victory feasts of

[1]) Pelleschi, *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*, p. 105.

[p. 102]

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

I had not planned to investigate. I hoped that the notes I took then would be useful for a more systematic and complete study of the Matako in the future. I should never have thought of publishing these tales and documents had I not good reason to believe that there is little chance for me to return to the Chaco.[1] Even if destiny should take me again to that country, I do not know whether the same material would be available. The disappearance of the old native cultures in South America is rapid, especially among tribes of a low cultural level.

The Matako, more than any other Chaco tribe, have been exposed to the degrading influence of white colonists, but there still remain some villages, especially on the upper Pilcomayo and on the middle course of the Bermejo, where the natives live according to ancient standards. Those who had their villages along the »linea», the new railway between Formosa and Embarcación, were the most miserable wretches that I saw in South America. Generous English missionaries try with very precarious means to rescue the Indians by extending to them the protection of the Mission stations and by helping during the critical period of transition from their native culture toward a new form of life. The mission work among the Matako has proved most successful. The Indians have shown extraordinary aptitude and under the direction of the English missionaries they display remarkable talents in crafts that they ignored completely a few years ago. Their zest for instruction has always been deep and their enthusiasm must sometimes be moderated. The rapidity and ease with which the Matako adapt themselves to our modern civilization remains one of the most puzzling problems that I met with in South America. Seen in their native environment the Matako seem to be the most irreducible tribe of the Chaco. Even their physical aspect carries an impression of

[1] I was unable to check many of the ethnological data given in the notes. To make them scientifically available I have reproduced the information in the very terms of the Indians.

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

primitiveness more accentuated than that of other tribes. They are among the dirtiest peoples of South America, and in the sense of cleanliness they are inferior to the Toba.

Matako material culture does not differ markedly from that of any of the other Chaco tribes. Their weapons are the same, their houses of the common beehive type, and their craftsmanship is hardly distinguishable from that of their neighbors. Judged outwardly, the Matako might be confused with the mass of Chaco cultures. A keen observer notices a slight superiority in the agriculture of the Matako, as compared with the Toba. The distinctive character of Matako culture may only be appreciated in contrast with that of the Toba-Pilagá. While the Matako are generally peaceful the Toba are warlike and have almost always been the conquerors in the far distant regions. However, it cannot be said that the Matako have not also fought bravely against their enemies or that they are lacking in military tradition. Still the contrast between them is striking even to an observer like myself who has spent only a short time among these Indians. The difference between these apparently identical cultures lies primarily in the stressing of religion and magic among the Matako in contrast with the relative unimportance of like interests among the Toba. Although built on the same pattern as that of the Toba, the culture of the Matako is interwoven with ceremonial activities, ritual dances, and expulsion of spirits. It is almost impossible to stay with a group of Matako more than one day without having the opportunity to attend some ceremony. The traditional blowing of medicine-men upon the sick occurs among the Matako as among other Chaco tribes. It is always associated with dances together with spells of magic and has rarely the individual character of the same ceremony among the Toba. Not only are the peformances of Matako medicine-men more impressive than those of other tribes in the same area, the external appearance of the medicine-man and his assistants denotes the great importance given to ritual details and

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Matacos or Noctenes

M 131 648 This tribe is also very numerous; it lives on the right bank of the Pilcomayo River, occupying the part opposite the zone occupied by the Toba, with whom they maintain friendly relations which are disturbed from time to time, especially at the time when the algarrobas and other fruits ripen.

M 799 179 A group of these Indians in times past formed a part of the San Antonio del Pilcomayo Mission, where today the Chaco Delegation is located, occupying the mission buildings. But because they are as fickle, or perhaps more so, than the Toba, Religion and the State could make little progress with such Indians.

M 131 197 648 T 186 These Indians are very numerous and in small groups extend as far as the shores of the Bermejo; their language is totally different from that of the other tribes and they hardly mix, although they maintain friendly relations with the Toba, to whom they are considered to be inferior.

M 181 578 273 Their physiognomy is overly languid; sadness can be read in their faces, and they are very miserable; nevertheless they are ferocious in war, in jealousy, or in a state of drunkenness; they injure and kill one another. Out of these considerations the women refrain from drinking to the state of inebriation in order to prevent their husbands' disorders and to hide the weapons in the event of the outbreaks which frequently occur (1).

M 273 [171]

M [243]

1. In the drinking bouts they are the same as the Toba; they make a mead from the fruits of the algarroba, which is almost as intoxicating as brandy; they also make mead from other wild fruits; they do not make chicha because they hardly plant maize.

M 181 721 648 They are more peaceful Indians than the Toba, are not very warlike, and do not attack the houses of the whites but profit when they can from the latter's cattle, especially should a famine break out due to a lack of wild fruits.

Choroti SK6
Mataco SI7
Güisnais

Ci 301 302 171 /321 cont./ Doubtless through being very close to the Toba, they pierce their ear lobes, in which they put pieces of wood, and they also stain their faces.

Ci 648 [464] In the expeditions to the Paraguay they have never shown themselves to be hostile to the whites and soldiers; rather they have lent important services and it was they who saved the life of Señor Touvar and his companions when they became separated from the expedition. Therefore the reduction of these Indians to civilized life would be very profitable.

Güisnáis

M 131 101 These Indians occupy the western bank of the Pilcomayo facing the Choroti Indians and southwest of the region occupied by the Mataco. The geographic degree of their territory, with a very slight difference, is the same as that of the Choroti, since they are separated from the latter only by the river bed.

M 101 181 241 231 197 They are a division of the Mataco; they speak the latter's language with very little difference; their customs are nearly identical and their number quite small. They are of a peaceful nature like the Choroti, and like them, they plant gourds and other vegetables. They also devote themselves to the raising of domestic animals, such as cows, horses, sheep, goats, and chickens.

M 167 177 464 224 Even the Güisnáis frequently come out for jobs in the Argentine Republic, from where they also bring back weapons, in order to use them particularly in the woods, killing birds, wild boars, deer, and other quadrupeds.

M 124 771 776 [756] They have more religious ideas than other tribes, and it seems that their great-grandparents might have belonged to some former Argentine mission, because, more than others, they recognize a true divinity. /322/ Nonetheless in their great ignorance they confuse ideas, and in great fear they recognize in sorcerers a power that they do not have.